

# National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Meal Pattern for Preschoolers

## School Year 2021-22

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meal pattern for preschoolers is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) final rule, *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*. For information on meeting the preschool meal pattern and crediting requirements, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) guide, *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)*, and handout, *Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns*; and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Food Components <sup>1</sup>	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
<b>Milk, fluid</b> <sup>2</sup> Age 1: Unflavored whole milk Ages 2-4: Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk or unflavored fat-free milk	4 fluid ounces (½ cup)	6 fluid ounces (¾ cup)
<b>Meat/meat alternates</b> <sup>3</sup> Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1 ounce	1½ ounces
Surimi <sup>4</sup>	3 ounces	4.4 ounces
Tofu, soy products, tempeh, or alternate protein products (APPs) <sup>5</sup>	1 ounce	1½ ounces
Cheese	1 ounce	1½ ounces
Cottage cheese	¼ cup	⅜ cup
Egg, large	½	¾
Cooked dry beans or peas <sup>6</sup>	¼ cup	⅜ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut or seed butters	2 tablespoons	3 tablespoons
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds <sup>7</sup>	½ ounce = 50%	¾ ounce = 50%
Yogurt or soy yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened <sup>8</sup>	4 ounces or ½ cup	6 ounces or ¾ cup
<b>Vegetables</b> <sup>9, 10</sup>	⅛ cup	¼ cup
<b>Fruits</b> <sup>10, 11, 12</sup>	⅛ cup	¼ cup
<b>Grains</b> <sup>13, 14, 15, 16</sup> Whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	½ ounce equivalent (oz eq) <sup>16</sup>	½ oz eq <sup>16</sup>
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal <sup>17</sup> , cereal grain <sup>18</sup> , or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal (dry, cold) <sup>17</sup>		
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup
Puffed	¾ cup	¾ cup
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup
◀ Refer to page 2 for important menu planning notes ▶		

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## Menu planning notes for lunch

- <sup>1</sup> Lunch must include the minimum serving of all five components. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#), [Product Formulation Statements](#), [Accepting Processed Product Documentation](#), and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP](#); and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- <sup>2</sup> Flavored milk cannot be served. For more information, visit the "Milk Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- <sup>3</sup> The meat/meat alternates component must be served in a main dish, or a main dish and one other food item. A serving is the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, fillers, or other ingredients. Commercial processed products require a CN label or PFS to credit. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP](#). The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends serving only lean meats, nuts, and legumes; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese. For more information, visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- <sup>4</sup> Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). A CN label or manufacturer's PFS is required to credit surimi differently.
- <sup>5</sup> APPs must meet the requirements in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). Tofu must contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP](#). A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component if the product's ingredients include only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. Tempeh products that contain other ingredients require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information.
- <sup>6</sup> Legumes (cooked dry beans and peas) credit as either the meat/meat alternates component or the vegetables component, but not both in the same meal. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- <sup>7</sup> Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component at lunch/supper. They must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to meet the total requirement. **Note:** Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to young children are in a prepared food, and are ground or finely chopped. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- <sup>8</sup> Yogurt and soy yogurt cannot contain more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams per ounce). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- <sup>9</sup> The vegetables component includes fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables, canned vegetables, rehydrated dried vegetables (PFS required), and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup of lettuce credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends that preschool menus include at least one serving per week of each vegetable subgroup (dark green, red/orange, beans and

# NSLP Meal Pattern for Preschoolers

## Menu planning notes for lunch, *continued*

- peas (legumes), starchy, and other). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP](#), and visit the "[Vegetables Component for Preschoolers](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- <sup>10</sup> Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. Juice includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#). The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice.
- <sup>11</sup> Vegetables can substitute for the entire fruits component at lunch. If lunch includes two servings of vegetables, they must be different kinds.
- <sup>12</sup> The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, canned fruit, dried fruit, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Serve canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup. The creditable serving of canned fruit in 100 percent juice may include the juice but cannot include water or syrup. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. For more information, visit the "[Fruits Component for Preschoolers](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- <sup>13</sup> To credit as the grains component, a whole grain, enriched grain, bran, or germ must be the first ingredient or the greatest ingredient by weight. For information on identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, [How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#); and visit the "[Grains Component for Preschoolers](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- <sup>14</sup> At least one serving per day must be WGR. The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends at least two servings of WGR grains per day. For the preschool meal patterns only, WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients are enriched, bran, or germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#), [Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#); and visit the "[Whole Grain-rich Requirement](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- <sup>15</sup> Grain-based desserts cannot credit. Examples include cookies, piecrusts in sweet pies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. Sweet crackers such as graham crackers and animal crackers are not grain-based desserts. However, the CSDE recommends not serving sweet crackers more than twice per week between all preschool meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's webpage, [Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP](#).
- <sup>16</sup> Ounce equivalents apply effective October 1, 2021. Grains must meet the required weights (groups A-E) or volumes (groups H-I) in [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#), or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "[Ounce Equivalents](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- <sup>17</sup> Breakfast cereals cannot contain more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams of sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- <sup>18</sup> Examples of cereal grains include amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat.

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For more information, refer to the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP* and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/LunchMealPatternPreschool.pdf>.

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